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REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERIM SECRETARIAT, INCLUDING REVIEW OF EXTRABUDGETARY FUNDS

Note by the Executive Secretary

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1/ This section is relevant to item 2(b) of the provisional agenda.

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I. CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERIM SECRETARIAT

A. "Clearing house" activities

1. At its sixth session, the Committee requested the Executive Secretary "to explore the best way of organizing a "clearing house" for the exchange of information and experience on relevant technical and financial co-operation activities, bilateral and multilateral, including greenhouse gas inventories and country studies, and to report to the Committee" (A/AC.237/24, para. 51).

2. The clearing house function can be considered as a support function for the task assigned to the Conference of the Parties (COP) by Article 12.7 of the Convention, which reads:

> "From its first session, the Conference of the Parties shall arrange for the provision to developing country Parties of technical and financial support, on request, in compiling and communicating information under this Article, as well as in identifying the technical and financial needs associated with proposed projects and response measures under Article 4. Such support may be provided by other Parties, by competent international organizations and by the secretariat, as appropriate."

3. This function is also related to Articles 8.2(c) and 12.4, as well as to paragraphs 8 and 9 of General Assembly resolution 47/195.

4. In exploring how best to organize this function, the Executive Secretary has consulted a number of other international secretariats involved in work on climate change: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This note draws upon those consultations. The views and proposals advanced are those of the Executive Secretary.

(i) Scope of a clearing house

5. Some definition of the scope of a clearing house would be needed to give focus to the use of limited resources, at least initially. National country studies on climate change could be an appropriate field for the clearing house to cover. This would respond to current needs of developing countries in relation to the Convention and of sources of multilateral and bilateral financing and technical cooperation.

6. National country studies can be described as efforts to collect data, assess vulnerability and identify options for national action to mitigate and adapt to climate change. They provide a background and source of inputs for national decisions on policies and measures and for the elaboration of national projects for external support. These decisions, in turn, form the basis for the communication of information to the COP under Article 12 of the Convention. However, the studies themselves constitute a preliminary phase and are not part of the formal obligations under the Convention.

7. Consequently, the exchange of information through a clearing house on national country studies should be distinguished from the communication of information under Article 12.

8. Two complementary types or levels of activity for a clearing house on national country studies may be identified and are briefly described below:

(a) A system for exchanging information relating to national country studies, for the purpose of facilitating and coordinating external support for such studies;

(b) Arrangements for evaluating experience relating to national country studies, for the purpose of improving practice in carrying them out.

(ii) Information exchange system

9. Support for national country studies will be facilitated by information on studies completed, in progress and planned, presented in such a way as to show gaps in the coverage of countries and subjects. This "demand-side" information, which could seek to cover all developing countries and countries with economies in transition, should be complemented by information on the supply of technical and financial support from developed countries listed in Annex II to the Convention. These two flows of information, if kept up to date, will help to match demand with supply and support efforts at coordination.

10. Information in the system could be structured in four blocks, related to:

a) Inventories of greenhouse gas emissions and sinks and other relevant national data;

b) Impacts and adaptation measures;

c) Mitigation measures, including economic analyses and greenhouse gas abatement costing studies; and

d) Research, systematic observation, education, training and other related activities.

11. In addition, the system could include summaries of results of completed national studies or parts of studies in all countries, developing and developed. Information on the methodologies used and the addresses of national contact points would be provided.

12. Sources of the information included in the system would be governments and international organizations. Information from the system would be openly available.

13. In a further phase of the system, information pertaining to activities in specific sectors (such as energy, transport, industry, agriculture, forestry and waste management) could be provided, if needed.

14. A number of technical alternatives are available to realize the system. Hence, a careful systems analysis will have to be undertaken to identify the most practical and cost-effective solution, taking into account structures of existing information systems. Effective data processing and dissemination of data to users would be important features of the system. Information would be available electronically, on diskette and in hard copy.

(iii) Evaluation of experience

15. A continuing assessment and evaluation exercise could usefully draw upon and complement the information exchange system. It could improve the way national country studies are carried out and the quality of their outputs. Such a feedback process would strengthen the basis for sound decision-making at each stage of the study process and the subsequent development of climate change activities in response to the Convention. Transparency and comparability of studies would help to build confidence in and between countries.

16. The need to develop guidelines and methodologies for the various components of the national country study process is recognized. This would help both supporting and implementing countries, as would the availability of criteria and parameters to evaluate the degree of success of a study and its utility for policy-makers. Improvements in the quality of data would be achieved as well.

(iv) Organizational arrangements

17. An information exchange system as described above would best be organized and operated as part of the central support for the Convention. In operating the system, sensitivity to the nature of commitments under the Convention would be important, as would links with national government departments and agencies engaged in the Convention process.

18. The availability of data processing capacities and efficient telecommunication services are key locational criteria. A further locational criterion is the proximity of collaborating organizations.

19. It may be envisaged to place the information exchange system under the auspices of the interim secretariat and later the Convention secretariat. The interim secretariat is currently developing its data processing capacities, supported by extrabudgetary funding for this purpose, and is looking forward to drawing upon those of the Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development in Geneva. Its location in Geneva places the interim secretariat in close proximity to WMO and IPCC, as well as some relevant elements of UNEP.

20. In setting up this system, full account must be taken of the capacities and needs of concerned entities, in particular of the related work undertaken by UNEP for IPCC. UNEP regularly updates a report on the status of country studies, available in hard copy; the most recent was circulated in November 1992. Discussions are under way between the interim secretariat and UNEP on the feasibility of a joint project to establish and operate an information exchange system located in Geneva.

21. Collaborative arrangements for evaluating experience in undertaking country studies could best be made by organizations undertaking and/or financing such studies, notably UNDP, UNEP, GEF, IPCC and OECD. Regular meetings of these organizations could be held for this purpose. Sources of bilateral support for country studies may also be involved. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the GEF may have a role to play in providing a framework for this process. The interim secretariat would be in touch with the evaluation process but would not be a leading actor.

22. The Executive Secretary would welcome the reactions of the Committee to these views and to the work in progress. The next steps would include costings for the purpose of fund-raising.

B. Information and training programme

23. A brief description of this programme, which has been developed by the interim secretariat and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), in collaboration with the GEF, IPCC and UNDP, was given to the Committee at its sixth session (A/AC.237/22, paras. 32 - 34). The overall objective of the programme is to strengthen the capacities of developing and other countries to implement the Convention. The Committee requested the Executive Secretary to pursue the programme (A/AC.237/24, para. 52).

24. A proposal for the one-year pilot phase of the programme was submitted for financing through the GEF. In the context of the GEF, the proposal is being treated as a possible UNDP project. This proposal has been reviewed in January 1993 by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the GEF (STAP), and in February 1993 by the Implementation Committee of the GEF. These reviews recognised the importance of this type of capacity-building project for the implementation of the Convention. At each stage of review, a number of comments were made leading to further refinement of the proposal.

25. A recasting of the proposal is underway to take into account the substantive comments made by the GEF partners. It is expected that the project will be included in the Fifth Tranche of the GEF programme that will be reviewed by the GEF Participants' Meeting in May 1993. It is hoped that the pilot phase of the programme will be launched early in the second half of 1993. Meanwhile, work will continue in collaboration with other partners on curriculum development and on contacts with countries that could host the workshops envisaged for the pilot phase.

C. Cooperation with UNEP/WMO Information Unit on Climate Change

26. A close working relationship has been established between the UNEP/WMO Information Unit on Climate Change (IUCC) and the interim secretariat of the Convention in a joint effort to contribute to the accomplishment of the Convention's objectives. Collaboration in the following areas is under way:

27. Joint documentation centre: Such a centre will raise the quality of the information services offered to Governments, NGOs, researchers and other users. Work has already been advanced on a unified computerized catalogue of the holdings of both bodies. A joint publication, entitled "Information on Documentation Databases" (A/AC.237/Misc. 24), was made available at the sixth session of the Committee. It will be updated for the eighth session. In addition, the possibility of sharing premises and the services of a full-time documentalist/librarian is being pursued.

28. Wide Area Network: The linking of the documentation centre and the respective computer local area networks in a wide area network will greatly improve the ability of IUCC and the interim secretariat to service the information needs of Governments and other partners via electronic links. The active participation of other parties, in particular IPCC and GEF, is being sought.

29. Climate Change Newsletter: IPCC is a third partner in this venture. The Newsletter will improve the availability of information on climate change activities in the United Nations system, drawing on a wide range of contributors. The Newsletter will publish a system-wide calendar of climate change events. The first issue of the Newsletter is planned for the second quarter of 1993.

30. Production of information and training materials: IUCC will produce videos, manuals and training materials in support of various activities, including the information and training programmes described in section II.B above. IUCC will also produce the Convention in booklet form for wide dissemination, together with a brochure and kit folder.

D. Development of data processing capacities

31. With a grant of US$210,000 from Switzerland, the interim secretariat is undertaking a project to develop its expertise in managing data and exchanging information relevant to the Convention. The project outputs include a local area network within the secretariat, linkages with other institutional partners through a wide area network, electronic mail capabilities for communication with focal points in Governments and other interlocutors, and work on data bases. This project is meant to enable the secretariat to respond to needs arising from the implementation of the Convention. It is relevant to the activities mentioned in sections I.A, I.B and I.C above.

E. Information on relevant activities of the United Nations system

32. In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 47/195, paras. 8 and 9, the interim secretariat plans to convene a meeting of United Nations system entities having activities related to the Convention, with a view to obtaining information on these activities for the Committee. This information will broaden and up-date that conveyed to the Committee at its sixth session in document A/AC.237/22. The meeting will also be an occasion to identify existing or possible joint efforts, potential strengthening of activities and areas that might benefit from improved coordination. Some key intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations will also be invited to attend. A report will be submitted to the eighth session of the Committee.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

33. In the context of the current restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat, it is expected that the secretariat of the Committee will be designated as the interim secretariat of the Convention and attached to the newly-established Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD). The designation of the interim secretariat of the Convention would be in accordance with Article 21.1 of the Convention and with General Assembly resolution 47/195, para. 11.

34. The secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification, located in Geneva, will also be attached to the DPCSD. Other Geneva-based elements of the Department include data management and administrative services, that will be available to support the climate change and desertification secretariats. The proximity of these two secretariats will permit mutual support arrangements, which have already started. In addition, there are expected to be opportunities for the climate change secretariat to draw upon other staff resources of the Department.

35. The United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) is seeking suitable office premises to be shared by the Geneva-based elements of the DPCSD. One option being explored is for these to be located in the building known as the Geneva Executive Centre, where various units of UNEP will also be located. This option is supported by an offer of the Swiss authorities to provide space in that building to the interim secretariat free of rent.2/ Location of the interim secretariat of the Convention in the same premises as relevant elements of UNEP will encourage collaboration in work on climate change.

36. Budgetary provisions for the interim secretariat will be determined in the framework of the DPCSD. At time of writing, the revised estimates for the remainder of 1993 have yet to be approved by the General Assembly. It is possible that the consideration of these estimates by the General Assembly will be going on while the Committee is meeting. The proposals before the Assembly deal with staff resources for the DPCSD as a whole, without identifying any additional posts to be allocated to the interim secretariat of the Convention. Such allocation will be derived from a subsequent determination of needs within the DPCSD itself. It is consequently not possible at this stage to state with certainty what will be the response to the request by the General Assembly that the Secretary-General strengthen the secretariat established by its resolution 45/212 so that it may function as the interim secretariat of the Convention and provide adequate support to the evolving work of the Committee (General Assembly resolution 47/195, para. 11).

2/ Under the Swiss offer, the units relocated to the Geneva Executive Centre will be expected to pay the same amount of rent being charged for their present office space. Since the interim secretariat is not paying rent for its offices in the Petit-Saconnex Annex of UNOG, it will not be charged rent for the new premises.

37. The present staffing situation of the secretariat is as follows. In December 1992, the General Assembly approved a "maintenance budget" for the secretariat until 31 March 1993. This provided for five professional staff (1 D.2; 1 D.1; 1 P.4; 1 P.3 and 1 P.2) and four general service staff.3/ In addition, WMO continues to provide one D.1 and two general service staff; Norway and Sweden have extended for a further twelve months their support for one L.2 position (Legal Assistant); and support by France for another L.2 position (Scientific Assistant) will continue until June 1993. UNEP is expected to resume the staff support which it had made available during the negotiation of the Convention by seconding a legal officer from the middle of this year; this officer has already been made available to help service the sixth and seventh sessions of the Committee. Furthermore, the Netherlands is to finance one L.6 position (Scientific Officer) for approximately three years from April 1993.

38. This staffing situation is presented in tabular form below:

Present staff resources of the interim secretariat, classified by level and source of funding

	Regular budget provision to 31 March 1993	Other sources	Total
D.2	1		1
D.1/L.6	1	2 (WMO; bilateral)	3
P.5	-		-
P.4	1	1 (UNEP)4/	2
P.3	1		1
P.2/L.2	1	2 (bilateral)	3
Total	5	5	10
GS	4	2 (WMO)	6

3/ Provision for general service staff is actually two below the current complement. These two positions have been financed out of extrabudgetary funds and overheads.

4/ The level of the UNEP post is to be confirmed.

39. Broadly speaking, the staff available to the secretariat until now has enabled it to organize and support the negotiating process. Its main substantive expertise has been in legal advice and drafting. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, the substantive needs of the interim phase will require new skills related to the implementation of the Convention; a nucleus of these skills should be established within the interim secretariat (A/47/466, paras. 29 - 31). This judgement was explicitly supported by the Committee at its sixth session (A/AC.237/24, para. 49). The work programme adopted by the Committee at that session confirms the view that new expertise will be required within the secretariat to support the Committee's work on preparations for the communication and review of information (Task A in its work plan) and on the implementation of the arrangements for the financial mechanism and the provision of technical and financial support to developing country Parties (Task B). At present, the only new staff resource available to meet these needs is the scientific officer to be financed by the Netherlands. It is hoped that the outcome of current deliberations on the allocation of staff resources within DPCSD will result in the provision of posts that will enable the interim secretariat to obtain the new skills required with immediate effect. These in-house skills would be supplemented by external expertise on a consultancy basis and by collaborative arrangements with other organizations.

40. A further question still under consideration by the General Assembly is the provision of resources to the interim secretariat for non-staff costs. In the past, this provision has had to be supplemented by drawing upon the trust fund for the negotiating process. One cost that has had to be repeatedly met from that fund is that of servicing the sessions of the Committee held outside Geneva. The regular provision for staff travel has not been adequate to cover additional costs on this account.

41. Once new arrangements are made for the administration of the interim secretariat within the framework of the DPCSD, it will be possible to seek improvements in such arrangements in the light of past experience. This is especially important in relation to the administration of extrabudgetary funds.

III. EXTRABUDGETARY FUNDS

42. A report on the operation of the two extrabudgetary funds established under General Assembly resolution 45/212, paras. 10 and 20, was provided to the Committee at its sixth session (A/AC.237/23 and Add.1 and Corr.1). The annexes to the present note show the current status of pledges and receipts for the two funds.

43. The commitments from the special voluntary fund for financing participation in the Committee's sessions up to the sixth session, including provision for programme support costs at 13 per cent, amount to an estimated US$2.5 million. It is estimated that the costs of financing participation in the seventh session will be around US$500,000. In addition, the estimate of the cost of funding participation in the eighth session is US$600,000.

44. As reported to the sixth session, support for the participation of delegates from certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe continues to be provided on the basis of additional contributions from the Government of Switzerland, amounting to some US$84,000.

Annex 1

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUPPORT THE PARTICIPATION OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
Status of contributions as of 8 March 1993a/

A. Contributions to Special Voluntary Fund
(General Assembly resolution 45/212, paragraph 10)

Contributor	Pledge (outstanding)	Receipt (or in pipeline)b/
Austria (x3)		$US 40,000 8 August 1991 $US 25,000 28 August 1991 $US 25,000
Canada (x2)		$US 30,085.16 29 March 1991 $US 84,745.76b/
Commission of the European Communities (x2)		$US 63,580 27 August 1992 ($US 60,000)
Denmark (x3)	$US 80,000	$US 100,000 23 April 1991 $US 50,000 4 March 1992 $US 74,985.00 24 November 1992
Finland		$US 104,866.77 20 March 1991

a/ Figures in brackets are approximate equivalents in United States dollars.

b/ Where the date of receipt is not given, payment has been reported but the secretariat has not yet received a copy of the receipt issued by United Nations Headquarters.

Contributor	Pledge (outstanding)	Receipt (or in pipeline)b/
France (x6)	FF 300 000 ($US 54 000)	$US 34,782.61 16 April 1991 $US 36,413.29 25 November 1991 $US 18,065.21 27 January 1992 $US 59,642.15 25 September 1992 $US 62,500
Germany (x4)c/	DM 210,000 ($US 131,250)	$US 100,000 27 August 1991 $US 32,292.12 July 1992 $US 150,505.27 11 September 1992
Greece		$US 10,000b/
Ireland		$US 10,000 3 July 1991
Netherlands (x2)		$US 150,000 12 September 1991 $US 59,007 15 December 1992
Norway (x4)	NOK 100,000 ($US 15,000)	$US 49,985 23 March 1991 $US 31,048.14 27 November 1991 $US 15,309.50 1 December 1992
Spain (x3)		$US 54,644.80 15 April 1991 $US 19,612.84 3 January 1992 $US 48,058 14 May 1992

c/ An offer of DM 50,000 by Germany late in 1992 could not be taken up on account of procedural difficulties.

Contributor	Pledge (outstanding)	Receipt (or in pipeline)
Sweden (x3)		$US 86,058.51 14 March 1991 $US 85,873.76 19 February 1992 $US 79,048.30 30 December 1992
Switzerland[d/] (x2)		$US 210,896.31 10 April 1991 $US 58,394.16
Turkey		$US 3,000 5 April 1991
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (x5)	stg. 40,000 ($US 68,000)	$US 43,312.50 4 April 1991 $US 50,682 10 September 1991 $US 35,959 21 September 1992 $US 53,961 22 September 1992
United States of America (x3)		$US 50,000 18 June 1991 $US 100,000 June 1992 $US 50,000 5 October 1992
World Meteorological Organization		$US 34,698.13 20 April 1991
Totals	**$US 348,250.00**	**$US 2,542,012.29**
TOTAL FINANCE THROUGH SPECIAL VOLUNTARY FUND (approx.)		**$US 2,900,000.00**

d/ See also para. 44 of this document.

B. Other contributions made to or in consultation with the secretariat

Contributor	Pledge (outstanding)	Receipt (or in pipeline)b/
Japan		$US 200,000e/
United Nations Development Programme		($US 100,000)f/
TOTAL		**$US 300,000**

e/ Contributions paid from the Japanese Trust Fund for International Cooperation for Development to finance travel to and participation in pre-session seminars and training activities.

f/ Offered to participants from 20 developing countries selected by UNDP

Annex 2

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUPPORT THE TRUST FUND FOR THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS
(General Assembly resolution 45/212, paragraph 20)
Status of contributions as of 8 March 1993a/

Contributor	Pledge (outstanding)	Receipt (or in pipeline)b/
Australia	$Aus 25,000 ($US 17,000)	
Commission of the European Communities (X2)		$US 63,580 27 August 1992 ($US60,000)
France		$US 18,065.21 27 January 1992
Netherlands		$US 31,018.04 13 July 1992
Norway (X2)		$US 15,341.40 30 April 1992 $US 15,309.50 1 December 1992
Switzerland (x3)		$US 34,734.28 5 February 1992 $US 149,985 14 July 1992 US$ 210,000c/ 28 January 1993
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (x2)		$US 52,629.53 $US 46,266.41 27 January 1993
United States of America	US$ 250,000	
Totals	**($US 267,000)**	**$US 696,929.37**
TOTAL FINANCE THROUGH TRUST FUND (approx.)		**$US 964,000.00d/**

a/ Figures in brackets are approximate equivalents in United States dollars.

b/ Where the date of receipt is not given, payment has been reported but the secretariat has not yet received a copy of the receipt issued by United Nations Headquarters.

c/ See para. 31 of this document.

d/ A payment of US$ 86,000 from Japan has been reported. The allocation of this amount to one or other fund is being clarified.